

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKE STAKEHOLDER NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 14TH, 2006

BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKES IN WISCONSIN

The Butler's gartersnake (*Thamnophis butleri*) is the smallest of the five species of gartersnake found in Wisconsin. The snake needs both moderately open upland and wetland habitats. In Wisconsin, the species is primarily found in the greater Milwaukee area including parts of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha counties; a small population is found in Fond du Lac and Sheboygan Counties. Wisconsin Butler's gartersnakes have been confirmed at approximately 50 sites since 1990. These populations are isolated from other Butler's populations in Indiana, Michigan, northwestern Ohio and Ontario.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) listed this species as Threatened in 1997, because of extremely high levels of habitat fragmentation and habitat loss within its range. The threat of hybridization at its southern edge with the plains gartersnake (*Thamnophis radix*) was also a factor in its listing.

Although the species can be found in degraded and disturbed sites, the biological problems associated with fragmentation can be severe and often lead to the extinction of local populations. As local extinctions accumulate, the very survival of the species in Wisconsin hangs in the balance.

TIME TO UPDATE THE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) developed The Butler's Gartersnake Conservation Strategy in 2004/2005, that assembled the latest information on its biology and threats. The strategy defines criteria to evaluate a site's conservation value based on the size and quality of the entire habitat patch. Each site is classified within a 3-tiered system, with protection measures identified for each tier.

The WDNR recognized this document as a "work in progress". The time

has now come to incorporate the most current science into the strategy, in a way that involves stakeholders to a greater extent using a workshop process for decision-making and action planning (see page 2 for details on the process).

For more information on the current Conservation Strategy, request a copy on the stakeholder response form or download online:

TIMELINE

- Open House to introduce the Stakeholder Workshop Process and the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, November 14th, 2006 - at the Pewaukee City Hall, Common Council Chambers.
- Stakeholder Workshop set for Monday February 5th to Thursday February 8th, 2007.
- Updated Conservation Strategy complete March 1st, 2007.

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/er/review/Butler/>

CONSERVATION BREEDING SPECIALIST GROUP

To assist in updating the current Conservation Strategy, the WDNR has asked the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) of IUCN-The World Conservation Union's Species Survival Commission to design and conduct a process that assesses risks and drafts a set of revised conservation strategies through stakeholder workshops.

The CBSG process brings detailed mathematical models of into a much larger interactive, participa-

tory workshop environment. The workshop is designed to broaden stakeholder involvement and enhance information sharing across scientific, social, and economic groups/interests.

The process shares available information across institutions and stakeholder groups, reaching agreement on the issues and available information, and then making useful and practical management rec-

ommendations for the species and habitat.

CBSG has applied this approach for over 10 years, in nearly 50 countries. Visit their website, for specifics on their process and work they have completed.

<http://www.cbsg.org>



Conservation Breeding Specialist Group

Species Survival Commission
IUCN – The World Conservation Union

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

The Stakeholder Workshop in February is three and a half days long. It will go from the morning of the 5th to noon on the 8th. We are looking for 35-50 dedicated volunteers to represent the broad array of stakeholder interests.

Stakeholder participants will work together to identify the key issues affecting the conservation of

the Butler's gartersnake and then tackle the implications within working groups. Each working group will produce a report of their discussions, which will be assembled along with other information to produce a report at the end of the workshop. The Stakeholder Workshop report will be the foundation of the revised Conservation Strategy.

A successful workshop depends on determining an outcome where all participants, many coming to the meeting with different interests and needs, benefit through the development of a revised Conservation Strategy. Make sure your interests and needs are represented and volunteer to be a participant at the Stakeholder Workshop!

YOUR INPUT WANTED

To ensure broad stakeholder involvement in making this process a success, whether or not you will be a workshop participant, we would like to hear from you. Please fill out the stakeholder response form & return via fax or mail. Let us know what issues/concerns you have and would like addressed as part of this process, including topics for future newsletter articles.

The Stakeholder Newsletter will be mailed out monthly to keep you informed on the process and layout opportunities for involvement.

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